

Statement of Rep. John Conyers, Jr.
2004 Election Forum
Columbus, Ohio, December 13, 2004

At the outset of this hearing, I would like to announce that **10 Members of Congress, including myself, have written to Governor Taft asking him to either delay or treat as provisional the vote of Ohio's presidential electors.** Secretary of State Blackwell's actions have had the result of unduly delaying the initial certification of votes so that any recount and other litigation could not possibly be completed by December 13. Under these circumstances, law and equity – not to mention the credibility of our democratic system – demand a delay.

The closer we get to Columbus and the Ohio presidential election, the worse it looks. Each and every day it becomes increasingly clear that the Republican power structure in this state is acting as if they have something to hide:

- 1) Why else would the Secretary of State abrogate Ohio law and **lock down public election records in Green County this weekend?**
- 2) Why else would Mr. Blackwell -- who is also the co-chair of the Bush-Cheney campaign in Ohio -- **take** position after position to prevent citizens from registering, prevent registered voters from getting ballots, and prevent lawful ballots from being counted?
- 3) Why else would Mr. Blackwell **refuse to answer a single one of the 36 questions presented to him by 12 members of Congress?**
- 4) Why else would Mr. Blackwell unnecessarily delay the certification of the Ohio vote, making a recount impossible by the meeting of the electoral college?
- 5) Why else would the exit polls, which showed a significant lead for Kerry throughout the day, be so out of whack with the final returns?

6) Why else would there *not be a single investigation by the state into the huge Republican effort to disenfranchise minority voters?* No investigation into the unprecedented lock down on Warren County? No investigation into the mysterious disappearance of 4,000 votes in Franklin County?

There is no right more precious in our constitution than the right to vote. That is why I pledge that this investigation will not end and we will not go away until these questions are answered.